CHECKLIST ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Project Name:	**Hill County Electric Overhead Distribution Line South of Inverness**
Proposed Implementation Date:	Immediate
Proponent:	Hill County Electric
Location:	31N8ESec27, W2W2 – Sec34 NW4NW4
County:	Hill County
Trust:	Common Schools

I. TYPE AND PURPOSE OF ACTION

The proponent is requesting easement on state lands for placing overhead power distribution along high grade gravel road nine miles south of Inverness MT.

II. PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

1. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT, AGENCIES, GROUPS OR INDIVIDUALS CONTACTED:

Provide a brief chronology of the scoping and ongoing involvement for this project.

The Montana Department of Resources and Conservation/ Trust Lands Management Division (DNRC/TLMD) – Helena, MT and the Northeastern Land Office (NELO) have all been informed of the proposed installation project. The lessee has been informed of the proposed activities.

2. OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES WITH JURISDICTION, LIST OF PERMITS NEEDED:

DNRC/TLMD and NELO have jurisdiction over this proposed project.

DNRC is not aware of any other agencies with jurisdiction or other permits needed to complete this project.

3. ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

Alternative A (No Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC **does not** allow the proponent to install cable and facilities.
Alternative B (the Proposed Action) – Under this alternative, the DNRC **does** allow the proponent to install cable and facilities.

III. IMPACTS ON THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

4. GEOLOGY AND SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE:

Consider the presence of fragile, compactable or unstable soils. Identify unusual geologic features. Specify any special reclamation considerations. Identify any cumulative impacts to soils.

The soils within the proposed project area are silty through clayey loams. The terrain is mostly flat plains and occasional small drainages.

If the proponent is allowed to install the overhead distribution line some soils will be displaced and there is the potential for soil compaction to occur. The proponent will be required to put back any displaced soil and construction activities will only be allowed when the soil is dry or frozen.

Mitigation measures including no vehicle operation during wet or muddy conditions will minimize any impacts.

No cumulative effects to the soils are anticipated.

5. WATER QUALITY, QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION:

Identify important surface or groundwater resources. Consider the potential for violation of ambient water quality standards, drinking water maximum contaminant levels, or degradation of water quality. Identify cumulative effects to water resources.

All water resources are avoided in order to minimize impacts.

No important groundwater resources are expected to be impacted.

No cumulative effects to the water resources are anticipated.

6. AIR QUALITY:

What pollutants or particulate would be produced? Identify air quality regulations or zones (e.g. Class I air shed) the project would influence. Identify cumulative effects to air quality.

Construction equipment has the potential to generate airborne dust. These activities will minimally affect air quality for a very limited amount of time.

No cumulative effects to air quality are anticipated.

7. VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY:

What changes would the action cause to vegetative communities? Consider rare plants or cover types that would be affected. Identify cumulative effects to vegetation.

The overhead distribution line will follow nearby existing road barrow pits farm ground. The vegetation will regenerate naturally.

No rare plants or cover types are present.
No long term cumulative effects to vegetation are anticipated.

8. TERRESTRIAL, AVIAN AND AQUATIC LIFE AND HABITATS:
Consider substantial habitat values and use of the area by wildlife, birds or fish. Identify cumulative effects to fish and wildlife.

There are no habitats that will be affected by the installation due to the close proximity to an already disturbed public road and farm land.

No cumulative effects to habitats are anticipated.

9. UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES:
Consider any federally listed threatened or endangered species or habitat identified in the project area. Determine effects to wetlands. Consider Sensitive Species or Species of special concern. Identify cumulative effects to these species and their habitat.

There are no known federally listed threatened or endangered species in the proposed break area. No wetlands are present.

The Montana Natural Heritage Program lists 31 Species of Concern, and 10 Potential Species of Concern in Hill County that may occur on or near the project area.
The cumulative effects of the proposed overhead distribution line to the wildlife habitats and the associated Species of Concern would be minimal and short-term due to the installation primarily following existing roadbeds.

10. HISTORICAL AND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES:
Identify and determine effects to historical, archaeological or paleontological resources.

No historical or archaeological sites will be affected due to the state land being all farmland abutted to county borrow pit.
No effects.

11. AESTHETICS:
Determine if the project is located on a prominent topographic feature, or may be visible from populated or scenic areas. What level of noise, light or visual change would be produced? Identify cumulative effects to aesthetics.

During operations heavy equipment, vehicles, etc. will be seen and heard in the vicinity of the project. These will only be present during installation and therefore no long term affects to the aesthetics of this area will occur.

There will be installation of overhead power poles.

The state land does not provide any unique scenic qualities not also provided on adjacent private lands. The proposed activity will be conducted in a remote area, so there would be no change to the aesthetics in either alternative.

No significant direct or cumulative effects to aesthetics are anticipated.

12. DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AIR OR ENERGY:
Determine the amount of limited resources the project would require. Identify other activities nearby that the project would affect. Identify cumulative effects to environmental resources.

No demands on limited resources are required for this project.

No direct or cumulative effects to environmental resources are anticipated.

13. OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTS PERTINENT TO THE AREA:
List other studies, plans or projects on this tract. Determine cumulative impacts likely to occur as a result of current private, state or federal actions in the analysis area, and from future proposed state actions in the analysis area that are under MEPA review (scoped) or permitting review by any state agency.

There are no known environmental documents pertinent to the area.

IV. IMPACTS ON THE HUMAN POPULATION

- *RESOURCES potentially impacted are listed on the form, followed by common issues that would be considered.*
- *Explain POTENTIAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATIONS following each resource heading.*
- *Enter "NONE" If no impacts are identified or the resource is not present.*

14. HUMAN HEALTH AND SAFETY:
Identify any health and safety risks posed by the project.

There is some human safety risks associated with operating heavy machinery. The proponent and their employees accept these risks.

Operating equipment and vehicles on and around public roads poses a hazard. The proponent and their employees shall take steps to minimize hazards to the public and accept any and all liabilities.

15. INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL AND AGRICULTURE ACTIVITIES AND PRODUCTION:
Identify how the project would add to or alter these activities.

There will be no impact to agricultural activities and production.

16. QUANTITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT:
Estimate the number of jobs the project would create, move or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to the employment market.

No cumulative effects to the employment market are anticipated.

17. LOCAL AND STATE TAX BASE AND TAX REVENUES:
Estimate tax revenue the project would create or eliminate. Identify cumulative effects to taxes and revenue.

There are no direct or cumulative effects to taxes or revenue for the proposed project.

18. DEMAND FOR GOVERNMENT SERVICES:
Estimate increases in traffic and changes to traffic patterns. What changes would be needed to fire protection, police, schools, etc.? Identify cumulative effects of this and other projects on government services

There will be minimal increases in traffic, no changes in traffic patterns, and no need for additional fire protection, or police services.

There will be no direct or cumulative effects on government services.

19. LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS:
List State, County, City, USFS, BLM, Tribal, and other zoning or management plans, and identify how they would affect this project.

There are no zoning or other agency management plans affecting these lands.

20. ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES:
Identify any wilderness or recreational areas nearby or access routes through this tract. Determine the effects of the project on recreational potential within the tract. Identify cumulative effects to recreational and wilderness activities.

There are no wilderness areas or access routes through this tract.

This area has public access from public roads and is used primarily for agricultural purposes. Recreational activities are minimal.

21. DENSITY AND DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION AND HOUSING:
Estimate population changes and additional housing the project would require. Identify cumulative effects to population and housing

The proposal does not include any changes to housing or developments.

No direct or cumulative effects to population or housing are anticipated.

22. SOCIAL STRUCTURES AND MORES:
Identify potential disruption of native or traditional lifestyles or communities.

There are no native, unique or traditional lifestyles or communities in the vicinity that would be impacted by the proposal.

23. CULTURAL UNIQUENESS AND DIVERSITY:
How would the action affect any unique quality of the area?

No effects.

24. OTHER APPROPRIATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES:

Estimate the return to the trust. Include appropriate economic analysis. Identify potential future uses for the analysis area other than existing management. Identify cumulative economic and social effects likely to occur as a result of the proposed action.

The easement of tracts in this project will return $1289.05 to the trust. This amount was determined using acreage taken in easements, and the Hill County Fee schedule.

These tracts are currently being managed in their best use.

EA Checklist Prepared By:	**Name:** Monte McNally **Title:** Land Use Specialist	
Signature: /s/ Monte N. McNally		**Date**: 11.3.11

V. FINDING

25. ALTERNATIVE SELECTED:

I have selected the **Alternative B (Proposed Action),** and recommend that the DNRC **does** allow the proponent to install the overhead power distribution.

26. SIGNIFICANCE OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS:

I have evaluated the potential environment affects and have determined that no cumulative environmental or social effects will result from the action alternative. A small amount of revenue to the State will result from the proposed activity.

27. NEED FOR FURTHER ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

[ ]	EIS	[ ]	More Detailed EA	[XXX]	No Further Analysis

EA Checklist Approved By:	**Name:**	Barny D. Smith
	Title:	Unit Manager, Northeastern Land Office
Signature: /s/ Barny D. Smith		**Date**: 11.3.11